114 connection I should like to mention above all the comprehensive work of Father M. Hermanns (2): Die Nomaden von Tibet, and the

2. Hermanns 3).

excellent portrayal by R. B. Ekvall (3) of the sociological and eco-

3. Ekvall 4).

nomic conditions of the region I visited. The book by Hermanns gives a wide survey of the culture of the Tibetan nomads; the work by Ekvall is rich in factual material and discusses the cultural relationships between Chinese, Mohammedans, and sedentary and nomadic Tibetans. This is extremely interesting for the ethno-sociologist.

The authors of these two books had the advantage of living for many years among the Tibetans and of speaking their language. I can present only a modest supplement to their work by setting forth
124 my observations of a single tent camp. Besides my assistant Mr. Wu Hsin-wei, an experienced ethnological field worker, I was fortunate enough to have as traveling companions an excellent interpreter for Tibetan and a reliable Tibetan stableman who spoke Chinese. My interpreter was a Chinese trader who lived in He-tso, the Chinese and Mohammedan settlement of some size nearest the area I visited. As a young man he had been forced into the region of the Tibetan nomads, following a Mohammedan uprising, and he lived and traded among these people for many years. He was particularly friendly with a few of the Tibetans in the camp I visited. He was a keen observer and was apparently himself interested in the life of the nomads. He was always willing to answer my questions as objectively as was possible for a simple trader, to arrange introductions /2a/ with Tibetan informants, and to interpret patiently.

133 The landscape and climate of the Tibetan steppes have often been depicted by more competent persons, so that a description will not be necessary. For the author, the weeks he spent in a small tent adjoining the camp of the Mewu-Fantzu were not only a period of ethnological field work, but also an inspiring experience of nature. In the height of summer the steppe is a gay carpet of flowers, especially edelweiss, luminous blue gentian, yellow and red pedicularis. On the heights between the shallow, narrow valleys there is a limitless vista on all sides, when it is not broken by individual steep, light-colored limestone massifs rising up more than 5,000 meters, their peaks often covered with freshly fallen

771 that of Lamaism in the religious life of the Tibetans. The chief
184 reason why Lamaism has not supplanted Tibetan folk religion entirely is probably the fact that Lamaism is a very exclusive priestly religion, in the ritual of which the layman participates only very little, whereas folk-religion, just as in China, corresponds most closely to the needs of the laymen, and is therefore the most indispensable to them. In Tibet, just as in China, a sort of border area has gradually arisen between Buddhist religion in its strictest sense and folk religion. In both countries Buddhism has taken over and more or less assimilated cults, rites and ideas from folk religion, and thus satisfied the religious needs of the people. The only difference has been that, in spite of its exclusiveness, Tibetan Lamaism is much more intimately interwoven with the religious, social and economic life of the entire people /42/ than is the case with Chinese Buddhism. The majority of the Chinese people are connected only very superficially with actual Buddhism, - most of them have very little or no contact with it at all. On the other hand, the religious life of present-day Tibetans is unthinkable without Lamaism.

771 We cannot, of course, attempt to give even a cursory descrip-
114 tion of Lamaistic religion in the following pages. Nor was it possible for me, during my brief stay with the Mewu-Fantzu, to gain a thorough knowledge of their folk religion. I must limit myself to a presentation of what my Chinese informer and interpreter, who was apparently interested, told me in answer to my questions about religion, what I learned from the Mewu-Fantzu themselves in conversations held through the interpreter, and my own observations and impressions. I shall try, however, to give the main characteristics of the religious life of the Tibetan layman - in this case the tent-dwelling, cattle-raising Mewu-Fantzu nomad.

186 Conversations with Tibetans which deal with their personal
771 conditions and especially with religious questions, are, of course,
124 difficult. The Tibetans are very suspicious of a stranger, being unaccustomed to the sight of foreigners, completely caught up in magic, and being unable to understand the interest of a stranger in their religious ideas and customs, which they themselves in most cases do not think about but simply accept. They are only too ready to fear that the stranger might cause harm with the knowledge he is seeking to gain. I was always obliged to wait for suitable occasions to bring the conversation around to religious problems as casually as possible. Often I had to change the subject,

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when I noticed that my questions seemed suspicious to the Fantzu, and take up the thread another time or with another person. In many respects I might have penetrated more deeply into a /43/ knowledge of the religious thinking of the nomads if I had questioned a lama, and perhaps I would have been better informed. But in that case I could not have avoided getting the viewpoint of the priest, and would not have learned what were the most important things in the religious life of the laymen.

Chinese and Tibetan folk religions are very closely related. In both cases religious thinking centers around a belief in spirits, nature demons and the souls of the dead. Therefore the most important religious acts consist in propitiating these spirits which are everywhere, and in warding off the misfortune they might cause. This belief in spirits and the rituals accompanying it are, in both folk religions, combined with a very primitive belief in magic and with many other superstitions.

The Mewu-Fantzu distinguish between actual evil spirits (Tibetan: djäxe-dan or djir-dan) and the spirits of the dead which correspond to the Chinese kuei (Tibetan: dzeo). The evil spirits cause sickness of man and beast, and sometimes loss of money or war, against which in the folk religion the sorcerer (böm-bu, see below) must intervene (he corresponds to the Chinese exorcist), or the lama in the religion of Lamaism.

The kuei can bring the same kind of misfortune. Above all are feared the spirits of those who were killed in war or who met with some other violent form of death. The Mewu-Fantzu also believe in the existence of headless spirits which are particularly feared. As among the Chinese, there are people who believe they can see ghosts.

If a kuei brings on an illness, the victim is possessed by the kuei, and the böm-bu must /44/ drive him out. If the sorcerer has driven him out but has been unable to destroy him, the kuei likes to station himself at crossroads. Hence people avoid them, especially at night, and prefer to make a detour. The souls of the dead which enter into the body of an animal, according to the Buddhistic belief in the transmigration of souls, are also feared, especially, as we have said, if they have died a violent death.

There is also a lively belief in nature demons, - mountain spirits, earth spirits and water spirits. Earth spirits are everywhere, and correspond to the t'u-ti-shen of the Chinese. The earth spirit is called "sa-tja"; like t'u-ti, he has a wife. He lives in the valley, usually along water. If one offends earth spirits, they can revenge

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and calls them "thsuba." I give the pronunciation of my Chinese interpreter. 575

seems to be to provide legal protection. The ts'aowa of the Mewu nomads consists of four groups. There are 40 to 100 families or tents in one ts'aowa group. Each group chooses its own council. There are no rules about the length of time the council of a ts'aowa group is in office The t'ou-mu cannot influence the choice of such a ts'aowa council. The individual ts'aowa groups are named /78/ after their councils. The power of each group within the tribe varies, and thus a certain family often strives to shift from a less influential group to a more influential one; they can do this by presenting the group council and several respected members of the group with a sheep and several chin of wine and inviting them to a meal. The group council, together with the entire group, is responsible for every crime committed by one of its members. It carries on negotiations with the council of another ts'aowa group if one of its members is obliged to pay a penalty to the members of another group for some crime, and the council must exact the penalty from the criminal and give it to the council of the other ts'aowa group. If a member of one ts'aowa group cannot pay the penalty demanded of him, the entire group guarantees to raise the fine. The condemned person must then gradually pay off the debt to the members of his group. The ts'aowa group can oust a criminal who they find is a burden to them, and the only thing left for him in that case is to join another group. I could not find out to what extent this is possible. Apparently there are never disagreements between the t'ou-mu and a ts'aowa group or its council about verdicts and penalties.

Legal matters. During my brief sojourn among the Mewu-Fantzu it was, of course, impossible for me, because of my ignorance of the language, to form a definite opinion about their character. This was all the more impossible because the Mewu-Fantzu, to begin with, have a grudging attitude toward a stranger. I had to spend considerable time talking to them on general topics before I could ask more detailed questions about their way of life, even though they knew my interpreter and did not dislike him. I should therefore like to insert here only a few statements of my interpreter who judged the Fantzu from the point of view of a simple, but intelligent Chinese /79/ trader, and who, of course, unwittingly made comparisons with the Chinese conditions of life under which he grew up. I did feel, however, that he made an effort to be neutral in his 624

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124 judgment. In any case, he had had no particularly bad experiences during all the years of his contact with the Fantzu, although this happens very often to Chinese because they find it hard to suppress a certain conceit toward peoples of other cultures.

888 My interpreter described the Mewu-Fantzu as generally sincere,
181 courteous and hospitable. They do not get angry very easily; they
577 are faithful in friendship and are very willing to help each other, but being a Chinese, my interpreter was very scornful of their lack of piety toward their parents. It can happen that an adult son refuses to take his parents into his tent, which is why one sometimes sees old people begging at the temples or burial places. Even wealthy people sometimes treat their parents badly. The Fantzu do not often lie, nor do they incline to boasting; on the contrary, they try to belittle their property, and they put little value on "face." Even wealthy people wear dirty clothes, and sometimes even beg. They do not forget insults. In business the Fantzu are less reliable than the Chinese. They often do not keep their promises, and sometimes they forget to pay.

683 The most common crimes are: theft, plunder, the infliction of
754 bodily injuries, and - in the opinion of the Fantzu themselves - black magic.

671 Common law, not written down, is the law of the Fantzu. The
692 a'ou-mu, to whom all the more serious legal cases are presented, decides according to his judgment, usually with the approval of the heads of the ts'aowa groups.

685 According to my interpreter, the Fantzu do not have a tendency to theft, at any rate they do not rob each other. /80/ If they accept a stranger in their midst, (1) they do not steal from him or rob

1. as in the case of the author who was recommended to the Mewu Lamasery by the Labrang Lamasery.

him, especially not when he is a guest in a tent or house.

[123] Inconsistent though it seemed, my interpreter was always very
685 careful about guarding my belongings which were, as far as possible, stored in the tent in such a way that they could not be easily got at from the outside. An American missionary assured me that this precaution was justified, for he had lived a great deal among the Fantzu and had often been robbed. Nevertheless, my interpreter's insistence that the Fantzu do not tend to steal is only an apparent contradiction. Wherever primitive ideas of justice prevail, stealing from strangers is probably judged on a different moral basis than